



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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For Immediate Release
Friday, January 20, 2006

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BAUCUS: WHITE HOUSE SHOULD FOLLOW PRESIDENT'S PHILOSOPHY ON RELEASE OF ALITO TAX RETURNS

*President tells small business leaders Thursday that officials' returns should be public,
but Administration stonewall continues on providing nominee's returns for independent review*

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, today called on the White House to live up to new remarks by President George W. Bush, who on Thursday told small business leaders in Sterling, Virginia that public officials' tax returns should be public, because public officials have a "high responsibility to uphold the integrity of the process." In the past year, Baucus has repeatedly requested that the Administration provide the Federal tax returns of Supreme Court nominees – including Judge Samuel Alito – for an independent review, as a measure of the nominees' integrity and fitness for the High Court. At a meeting with Alito this week, the nominee told Baucus he would be willing to provide his tax returns for review, but the White House refused to allow it. Baucus's requests, and legislation he subsequently introduced to compel a review of all Supreme Court nominees' returns, did not even require the returns to be made public as the President has now advocated for public officials.

"The President is right when he says that that the release of public officials' tax returns contributes to the integrity of our whole tax system, and his White House is wrong to keep withholding information on Judge Alito," said Baucus. **"The way nominees fill out their tax returns is an excellent barometer of personal integrity and of their willingness to faithfully fulfill the most basic Federal duties. That's why the Finance Committee reviews the returns of all nominees that come before our panel. If the President advocates the review of tax returns for himself and other public officials, I can't imagine why he wouldn't make it the rule for his Supreme Court nominees."**

In December, following the White House's failure to respond to requests for Federal tax information on Judge Alito, as well as withdrawn nominee Harriet Miers and now-Chief Justice John Roberts, Baucus introduced legislation requiring the Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT) to review and report on the tax records of all Supreme Court nominees. The Baucus legislation would require JCT to obtain and inspect three years' worth of tax returns for a Supreme Court nominee, and to report to the Senate Finance and Judiciary committees on the nominee's compliance with Federal tax law.

The Senate Finance Committee scrutinizes the tax returns of all nominees seeking confirmation before the panel, including Cabinet secretaries and tax court judges. The Senate has also reviewed Supreme Court nominees' tax returns in the past. In 1975, an independent congressional review of the financial statements and tax returns of nominee John Paul Stevens was cited as evidence that his "personal integrity... [was] of the highest order."